**Communications and Marketing Conference 2016 (22 Nov 2016)**

**Talk:** [Working Together – Communications and Marketing Priorities for 2016/17](http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=30531)

## Speaker: Terry Hudghton - Head of University Marketing

**Notes**



We are living in a time of change.   A post referendum, post-Presidential election, post-truth world.

And as a reminder that organisations need to constantly change, we are of course post-Woolworths, Kodak, HMV and post-BHS.

We are now post-One Direction.   And sadly, post-David Bowie; Prince, Leonard Cohen and post-Ronnie Corbett.

A world that is post-floppy disk, post-Myspace and will soon be post-Vine as well.

With digital communications now dominant  we are getting very close to a time when we are even going to be post-post!

Even our language is changing, apparently, according to the latest entries in the Oxford Dictionary we are living in a new Zeitgeist, an Alt-right world, where coulrophobia is rampant, and where as a result we seek out our Danish-style hygge (hugger).

A new era where seemingly the unimaginable can happen – the Zika virus, virtual reality, chatboxes, and Pokemon Go.

Where the United Kingdom has a world number 1 tennis player,  Leicester City win the Premiership, and Jose Morinho, the one-time best football coach on the planet, is now arguably not even the best coach in Manchester!     Has there ever been a time of such change?

On the other hand, if you look at history perhaps we are actually living in very stable times – my father, like the rest of his generation, was required to do national service,  when he was 18 he was sent out to Suez crisis, my grandfather managed to navigate his way through the second world war, and my great-grandfather through the first world war. They had some change to deal with.

So yes, we shall have to deal with increased competition, visa restrictions, Brexit and probably a few other things not even envisaged as yet.  But we are well placed to face those challenges.  We are ahead of most of our benchmark institutions in our communications and marketing – we have a comprehensive plan and a lot of our work has rapidly become digital, personal, content based, emotion stirring and award winning – we are ready to support the standardisation and efficiency agenda to make us increasingly cost-effective.



At this conference last year we headlined some actions from the plan that were our priorities for the first year of the plan - and you heard from Alan this morning about how well they are progressing.

But of course most of the actions in the plan may launch in one specific year but most, will not only continue into subsequent years,  but will expand - becoming embedded into business-as-usual and developing into real points of distinctiveness.  They include our increasingly consistent and effective web presence, training and development for this community, our repositioned externally facing magazine that has gained so many plaudits, and not least our Research Beacons.

This year some of the actions are already underway – I’ve categorised them into things that will take us forward through better organisation and better coordination and those that are effectively new opportunities for us.

In terms of better organisation and better coordination:



The Review of Student Recruitment, Marketing and Admissions resulted in a number of important recommendations that are currently moving into implementation. These include the development of a new Market Insight team to focus on all our student related work – located within the Division for the Student Experience and reporting into Paul Govey.  This will inform high level strategy including the newly formed Portfolio Strategy Group, which was another recommendation from the review, as well as acting as the single point of student based market insight for Faculties. More organisational considerations and recommendations will now form part of the Student Lifecycle Project with input from the CMLT.



We already enjoy one the highest rates of media coverage in our sector, with thousands of stories generating significant volume.  Jamie Brown, our Media Relations Manager, is leading a piece of work to develop a comprehensive Media Relations Strategy that will create even more direction and be firmly rooted in the actions of our overall communications and marketing plan.  It will provide leadership to the support already provided.



It’s now well recognised  that we are now doing fantastically well with our social media, routinely achieving a top 10 place in monthly rankings of all UK universities – this last moth we were ranked 3rd for our social media presence and engagement.

But we don’t want to stop there - Tom Mason is working with colleagues across the University to create a virtual social media hub, where planning and coordination of our social media will be heightened still further, where best practice and new developments are shared, and where training can be coordinated to best effect.

 

In Alan’s newly elevated role as Associate Vice-President for External Relations and Reputation, amongst other things, he will be working with many of us to see how we can bring a greater strategic approach to how the University engages externally through all its many facets.

We also have some exciting new opportunities:

**STELLIFY**

You’ll know that we recently launched the Stellify campaign. An innovative way of packaging all the extra and co-curricular opportunities open to students here – it encourages our students to make the most of their time with us – essentially to “do more, be more” and become the socially responsible graduates and leaders of the future.   And as part of that we have introduced to new students a prestigious award – the Manchester Leadership Award. Stellify and the award are designed to do for the student experience and social responsibility what the Beacons are starting to do for our research.

 

In the New Year we will be working hand in hand with colleagues from Social Responsibility on how we engage and communicate with the communities that are our immediate neighbours.  It’s something we feel is important but we know we haven’t got a great deal of experience in & we know we want to get much better at.



Something that is going to be very important in balancing our future books is Distance Learning. Communications and marketing will play a critical role in the future success of Distance Learning and take the University into new territory.  If the University gets it right the rewards could be significant.  This won’t be a normal discreet project – it will become part of the University’s overall offer and most of us in this room should have some involvement in some form.



And finally.  Naturally, we want our staff and alumni to be the very best ambassador’s they can be for this university.  So, to support them in that, we shall be creating a suite of materials, along with online and in-person training opportunities, that provide our staff and alumni with the knowledge and storylines that can help them represent the university to the very best of their ability.

**Conclusion**

Better/different/bigger - distinctiveness - 2020 Vision - support to leadership - good to great.



So in conclusion, that feels like another very comprehensive year of activity and progress and hopefully with equal success.   These actions from the communications and marketing plan are based on the principle we set out with – Better, Different, Bigger.  They are designed to enhance our reputation by creating real distinctiveness in our support of achieving the institutions 2020 Vision and Strategic Plan.  They move the role of communications and marketing from one of support to one of leadership …. And they will help us on our continued quest from Good to Great.



Thank you!